

6949

Committee on PUBLIC HEALTH

Testimony Against Raised H.B. No. 6949 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDHOOD VACCINATIONS

By: Sara Sabbagh

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Senator Terry Gerratana, Representative Matt Ritter and members of Public Health Committee. My name is Sara Sabbagh, an attorney licensed to practice in the State of Connecticut and I am writing testimony against HB 6949.

I oppose Raised Bill HB 6949 regarding religious exemption to vaccination because it is a violation of our First Amendment right to free exercise of our religious beliefs.

There is no compelling interest to override the religious exemption - this state has one of the highest vaccination rates in the country, and the bill is being brought due to sheer panic from the recent measles outbreak. The irony of this is that there were more measles cases the previous year - the Disney/media aspect just raised the profile. We can't take away religious rights because we are panicked.

As an aside, the population of parents that have unvaccinated children in Connecticut and across the country, are highly educated in this arena and that is why they have opted to file the religious exemption. We know the risks of vaccinations and because of our education we are able to determine that vaccinations aren't in line with our religious beliefs. Forcing us to go to a doctor to pick up a brochure won't change our religious beliefs, it only violates our rights. We take these rights very seriously and we are a population that will stand against this, albeit in an educated and respectful manner.

Sara Sabbagh

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